



California State Association of Counties Climate Change Policy Statements And Principles

DRAFT

Preamble

Climate change and the release of greenhouse gases (GHG) into the atmosphere have the potential to dramatically impact multiple aspects of human life, including our environment, public health and economy. In addition to international, federal and state efforts, local strategies are needed to protect our communities and demonstrate leadership on what could be one of the greatest environmental challenges of our time. Thus, CSAC supports and encourages efforts to reduce GHG emissions and the creation of a comprehensive and viable strategy to achieve these reductions.

Local governments have the ability to demonstrate leadership at the local and regional level to influence GHG emissions reductions and support a collaborative state, regional and local approach to the development of GHG reduction strategies. CSAC advocates that counties are a vital partner in the climate change arena, rather than another stakeholder in the debate. To this end, counties should be an active participant in the discussions and dialogue in the development of GHG reduction strategies currently under way at the state level.

With the passage of AB 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, California has embarked on a plan that establishes a regulatory and market mechanisms program with the goal of reducing GHGs to 1990 levels by 2020. In signing this legislation, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger established the nation's first environmental law of its kind, making climate change a priority for his administration and for California. Additionally, several measures have been taken by the Attorney General's office regarding climate change, general plans, transportation plans and CEQA documents. Because these efforts have the potential to directly or indirectly impact county government and the citizens they serve, it is imperative that county interests are represented in climate change discussions.

The following general principles and policy statements are CSAC's foundation for representing counties and the citizens they serve at both the administrative and legislative level.

General Principles

- CSAC recognizes the seriousness of climate change and its harmful effects on our environment, public health and economy. Although there remains uncertainty on the pace, distribution and magnitude of the effects of climate change, CSAC also recognizes the need for immediate actions to mitigate the sources of greenhouse gases.
- CSAC recognizes the need for sustained leadership and commitment at the federal, state, regional and local levels to develop strategies to combat the effects of climate change.
- CSAC recognizes the complexity involved with reducing greenhouse gases and the need for a variety of approaches and strategies to reduce GHG emissions.
- CSAC supports a flexible approach to addressing climate change, recognizing that a one size fits all approach is not appropriate for California's large number of diverse communities.
- CSAC supports special consideration for disadvantaged communities and rural areas that do not have the ability to address these initiatives without adequate support and assistance.
- CSAC supports cost-effective strategies to reduce GHG emissions and encourages the use of grants, loans and incentives to assist local governments in the implementation of GHG reduction programs.
- CSAC recognizes that adaptation and mitigation are necessary and complementary strategies for responding to climate change impacts. CSAC encourages the state to develop guidance materials for assessing climate impacts that includes adaptation options.
- CSAC supports the development of protocols and GHG emissions inventory mechanisms, providing the necessary tools to track and monitor GHG emissions at the local level. The state, in cooperation with local government, must determine the portfolio of solutions that will best minimize its potential risks and maximize its potential benefits. CSAC also supports the establishment of a state climate change technical assistance program for local governments.
- CSAC supports cooperation and coordination between federal, state and local entities to address the role public lands play in the context of climate change.

- CSAC recognizes that many counties are in the process of developing, or have already initiated climate change-related programs. CSAC supports the inclusion of these programs into the larger GHG reduction framework and supports acknowledgement and credit given for these local efforts.
- CSAC acknowledges its role to provide educational forums, informational resources and communication opportunities for counties in relation to climate change.
- CSAC recognizes that collaboration between cities, counties, special districts and the private sector is necessary to ensure the success of a GHG reduction strategy at the local level.
- CSAC encourages counties to take active measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and create energy efficiency strategies that are appropriate for their respective communities.

Fiscal – The effects of climate change and the implementation of GHG reduction strategies will have fiscal implications for county government.

- CSAC recognizes the potential for tremendous fiscal impacts on all levels of government as a result of climate change, i.e. sea level rise, flooding, water shortages and other varied and numerous consequences. CSAC encourages the state and counties to plan for the fiscal impacts of climate change adaptation, mitigation and strategy implementation.
- CSAC supports the use of grants, loans, incentives and revenue raising authority to assist local governments with the implementation of climate change response activities and GHG reduction strategies.
- CSAC continues to support its state mandate principles in the context of climate change. CSAC advocates that new GHG emissions reduction programs must be technically feasible for counties to implement and help to offset the long-term costs of GHG emission reduction strategies.
- CSAC supports mandatory revenue sharing mechanisms adequate to sufficiently augment the county revenue base in order to meet the demands of mandated countywide services in growing urban city centers.
- CSAC advocates that any new GHG reduction strategies that focus on city-oriented growth and require conservation of critical resource and agricultural lands within the unincorporated area should include a mechanism to compensate county governments for the loss of property taxes and other fees and taxes from lands removed from county jurisdiction.

Land Use and Climate Change – CSAC recognizes that population growth in the state is inevitable, thus any climate change strategies that affect land use must focus on how and where to accommodate and mitigate the expected growth in California. Land use planning and development plays a direct role in transportation patterns, affecting travel demands and in return vehicle miles traveled and fuel consumption. Smart land use planning and growth is critical to address transportation across all sectors (i.e. vehicle, air and train), which are responsible for 41% of GHG emissions in California. Furthermore, cars and light trucks contribute 30% of all GHG emissions. In order to better understand the link between land use planning, transportation and climate change further modeling and consideration of alternative growth scenarios is required to determine the relationship and benefits at both the local and regional levels.

- CSAC supports measures to achieve reductions in GHG emissions by promoting housing/jobs proximity and transit-oriented development, and encouraging high density residential development along transit corridors. CSAC supports these strategies through its existing smart growth policy for strategic growth. That policy also supports encouraging new growth that results in compact development within cities, existing urban communities and rural towns that have the largest potential for increasing densities, efficiently utilizing existing and new infrastructure investment and scarce resources, and strives towards achieving a jobs-housing balance.
- CSAC existing policy also supports the protection of critical lands when it comes to development, recognizing the need to protect agricultural lands, encourage the continued operations and expansion of agricultural businesses, and protect natural resources, wildlife habitat and open space.
- CSAC policy also acknowledges that growth outside existing urban areas and growth that is non-contiguous to urban areas may be necessary to avoid the impacts on critical resource and agricultural lands that are adjacent to existing urban areas.
- CSAC policy supports providing incentives for regional blueprint and countywide plans to ensure that rural, suburban and urban communities have the ability to plan for more strategic growth and have equitable access to revenues available for infrastructure investment purposes. It is CSAC's intent to secure regional and countywide blueprint funding for all areas.

- CSAC supports new fiscal incentives for the development of countywide plans to deal with growth, adaptation and mitigation through collaboration between a county and its cities to address housing needs, protection of resources and agricultural lands, and compatible general plans and revenue and tax sharing agreements for countywide services.
- CSAC recognizes that counties and cities must strive to promote efficient development in designated urban areas in a manner that evaluates all costs associated with development on both the city and the county. Support for growth patterns that encourage urbanization to occur within cities must also result in revenue agreements that consider all revenues generated from such growth in order to reflect the service demands placed on county government. As an alternative, agreements could be entered into requiring cities to assume portions of county service delivery obligations resulting from urban growth.
- Strategic growth plans at the regional level, whether land use or transportation, must be reconciled with the allocation of Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) and the obligation for cities and counties to zone for housing. The allocation of resources to cities and counties must be consistent with the RHNA obligation as well.
- A means for simultaneously achieving strategic growth and reduction of greenhouse gases is expected to occur at the regional level through the current blueprint and transportation planning processes. CSAC supports this method rather than a statewide “one size fits all” approach to addressing growth and climate change issues. Further, CSAC supports countywide approaches to strategic growth, resource and agricultural protection, targeting scarce infrastructure investments and tax sharing for countywide services.
- CSAC supports inclusion of recommendations and technical advice for local governments and regional agencies in the CEQA Guidelines to address acceptable methodologies for climate change analysis, significance thresholds and mitigation measures for long-range plans and project level review.
- CSAC supports state assistance to provide data and standardized methodologies for quantifying GHG emissions for determining and quantifying GHG emission sources and levels, vehicle miles traveled and other important data to assist both local governments and regional agencies in addressing climate change in environmental documents for long-range plans.
- CSAC supports efforts to minimize the risk to counties and lead agencies until the CEQA Guidelines are established as required by law in 2010.

- While local governments individually have a role in the reduction of GHG emissions, CSAC also supports regional, interregional, interjurisdictional and cross border efforts to achieve the ARB targets, including reliance on regional data and long-range plans that relate to air quality, transportation and regional growth strategies.

Energy – Reducing energy consumption is an important way to reduce GHG emissions and conserve. Additionally, the capture and reuse of certain GHGs can lead to additional sources of energy. For example, methane gas emissions, a mixture of methane, carbon dioxide and various toxic organic and mercuric pollutants, from landfills and dairies have been identified as potent GHGs. Effective collection and treatment of these gases is not only important to the reduction of GHG emissions, but can also result in an additional source of green power.

- CSAC supports legislative and regulatory green building programs that encourage the use of green building practices, incorporating energy efficiency and conservation technologies into state and local facilities. A green building is a term used to describe structures that are designed, built, renovated, operated or reused in an ecological and resource-efficient manner. Green buildings are designed to meet certain objectives using energy, water and other resources more efficiently and reducing the overall impact to the environment.
- CSAC supports the state's development of green building protocols, including standards for jails, hospitals and other such public buildings. CSAC supports developing regulations for sustainable building standards and incorporating specified standards described in the United States Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, including a certification system based on attaining credits.
- CSAC supports the use of grants, loans and incentives to encourage and enable counties to incorporate green building practices into their local facilities.
- CSAC supports the use of procurement practices that promote the use of energy efficient products and equipment.
- CSAC supports state efforts to develop a dairy digester protocol to document GHG emissions reductions from dairy farms. CSAC supports funding mechanisms that support the use of dairy digesters to capture methane gas and convert it to energy.

- CSAC supports state efforts to capture methane gases from landfills; and supports its development of a reasonable regulatory measure with a feasible timeline, that will require landfill gas recovery systems on landfills that can support a self-sustaining collection system. CSAC supports the development of a guidance document for landfill operators and regulators that will recommend technologies and best management practices for improving landfill design, construction, operation and closure for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions. CSAC also supports funding mechanisms, including grants, loans and incentives to landfill operators to help implement these programs.
- CSAC continues to support its existing energy policy, which states that counties should seek to promote energy conservation and energy efficiency. Counties are encouraged to undertake vigorous energy action programs that are tailored to the specific needs of each county. When developing such action programs counties should: (1) assess available conservation and renewable and alternative energy options and take action to implement conservation, energy efficiency and renewable energy development when feasible; (2) consider the incorporation of energy policies as an optional element in the county general plan; and, (3) consider energy concerns when making land use decisions and encourage development patterns which result in energy efficiency.

Water – Climate change has the potential to greatly affect California's water resources. According to the Department of Water Resources, projected increases in air temperature may lead to changes in the timing, amount and form of precipitation – (rain or snow), changes in runoff timing and volume, effects of sea level rise and changes in the amount of irrigation water needed. CSAC has an existing policy that recognizes the need for state and local programs that promote water conservation and water storage development.

- CSAC supports the incorporation of projections of climate change into state water planning and flood control efforts.
- CSAC recognizes that climate change has the potential to seriously impact California's water supply. CSAC continues to assert that adequate management of water supply cannot be accomplished without effective administration of both surface and ground water resources within counties, including the effective management of forestlands and watershed basins.
- CSAC supports water conservation efforts, including reuse of domestic and industrial wastewater, reuse of agriculture water, groundwater recharge, and economic incentives to invest in equipment that promotes efficiency.

- CSAC continues to support the study and development of alternate methods of meeting water needs such as desalinization, wastewater reclamation, watershed management, the development of additional storage, and water conservation measures.

Forestry– With a significant percentage of California covered in forest land, counties recognize the importance of forestry in the context of climate change. Effectively managed forests have less of a probability of releasing large amounts of harmful GHG emissions into the atmosphere in the form of catastrophic wildfires. Furthermore, as a result of natural absorption, forests reduce the effects of GHG emissions and climate change by removing carbon from the air through the process of carbon sequestration. CSAC also recognizes the benefits of biomass energy as an alternative to the burning of traditional fossil fuels, as well as the benefits of carbon sequestration through the use of wood products.

- CSAC continues to support its existing policy on sustainable forestry, encouraging sustainable forestry practices through the existing regulatory process, and encouraging continued reforestation and active forest management on both public and private timberlands.
- CSAC supports responsible optimum forest management practices that ensure continued carbon sequestration in the forest, provide wood fiber for biomass-based products and carbon-neutral biomass fuels, and protect the ecological values of the forest in a balanced way.
- CSAC supports the State's development of general forestry protocols that encourage private landowners to participate in voluntary emission reduction programs and encourage National Forest lands to contribute to the State's climate change efforts.

Agriculture– The potential impacts of climate change on agriculture may not only alter the types and locations of commodities produced, but also the factors influencing their production, including resource availability. Rising temperatures, changes to our water supply and soil composition all could have significant impacts on California's crop and livestock management. Additionally, agriculture is a contributor to GHG emissions in form of fuel consumption, cultivation and fertilization of soils and management of livestock manure. At the same time, agriculture has the potential to provide offsets in the form of carbon sequestration in soil and the production of biomass crops for energy purposes.

- CSAC supports State efforts to develop guidelines through a public process to improve and identify cost effective strategies for nitrous oxide emissions reductions.

- CSAC continues to support incentives that will encourage agricultural water conservation and retention of lands in agricultural production.
- CSAC continues to support full funding for UC Cooperative Extension given its vital role in delivering research-based information and educational programs that enhance economic vitality and the quality of life in California counties.

Air Quality— With 41% of GHG emissions coming from transportation in California, CSAC encourages the research and development and use of alternative, cleaner fuels.

- CSAC supports state efforts to create standards and protocols for all new passenger cars and light-duty trucks that are purchased by the state and local governments that conform to the California Strategy to Reduce Petroleum Dependency. CSAC supports state efforts to revise its purchasing methodology to be consistent with the new vehicle standards.
- CSAC supports efforts that will enable counties to purchase new vehicles for local fleets that conform to state purchasing standards, are fuel efficient, low emission, or use alternative fuels. CSAC supports flexibility at the local level, allowing counties to purchase fuel efficient vehicles on or off the state plan.
- CSAC supports incentives for the local conversion of county on and off road diesel powered vehicles.
- CSAC opposes federal standards that supercede California's ability to adopt stricter vehicle standards.
- Counties continue to assert that federal and state agencies, in cooperation with local agencies, have the ability to develop rules and regulations that implement clean air laws that are both cost-effective and operationally feasible. In addition, state and federal agencies should be encouraged to accept equivalent air quality programs, thereby allowing for flexibility in implementation without compromising air quality goals.
- CSAC also recognizes the importance of the Air Pollution Control Districts (APCDs) and Air Quality Management Districts (AQMDs) to provide technical assistance and guidance to achieve the reduction of GHG emissions.
- CSAC supports the development of tools and incentives to encourage patterns of product distribution and goods movement that minimize transit impacts and GHG emissions.

Solid Waste/ Recycling – The consumption of materials is related to climate change because it requires energy to mine, extract, harvest, process and transport raw materials, and more energy to manufacture, transport and, after use, dispose of products. Recycling and waste prevention can reduce GHG emissions by reducing the amount of energy needed to process materials, and reducing the amount of natural resources needed to make products.

- CSAC continues to support policies and legislation that aim to promote improved markets for recyclable materials, and encourages:
 - The use of recycled content in products sold in California;
 - The creation of economic incentives for the use of recycled materials;
 - Development of local recycling markets to avoid increased emissions from transporting recyclables long distances to current markets;
 - The expansion of the Electronic Waste Recycling Act of 2003 and the Beverage Container Recycling Program;
 - The use of materials that are biodegradable;
 - Greater manufacturer responsibility and product stewardship.

Health – CSAC recognizes the potential impacts of climate change on human health. As administrators of a variety of public health services and providers of health care services, California's counties have significant health, administrative and cost concerns related to a changing climate. Heat-related illnesses, air pollution, water pollution and supply issues, and infectious disease increases all relate to the range and cost of services provided by county governments. Counties believe that research, planning, and preparation are the keys to coping with the public health issues brought about by climate change, and that any public policy related to climate change and public health must take into account the existing roles and resources of county government.

- CSAC supports efforts to improve the public health and human services infrastructure to better cope with the effects of climate change through funding augmentations.
- CSAC supports state funding for mandated local efforts to coordinate responses to heat emergencies.
- CSAC supports efforts and funding to improve emergency prediction, warning, and response systems and enhanced disease surveillance strategies.